

What are the Information Needs of Communities & Citizens? The information needs of my community are no different than those of other communities. We have a local newspaper and a weekly newspaper that cover a great deal. They do lack depth and breadth, however, in reporting what is happening locally. We do not have a dedicated television station. We used to and it was useful to be able to turn to it in bad weather or during community emergencies to keep pace with events. Now we must rely on a distant television station that reports broadly and hit or miss outside of its main geographic area.

During the last election, very little information was available about local issues and candidates. After I voted, I wore the little label given out at the polls and was asked by a number of people about it and the election that they were unaware of as it related to them. They thought it all was for the political parties and missed that issues were being decided. This is not acceptable and is not good for issues that impact on state and local levels.

I also worry about emergencies. Several times over the last several years we have been under tornado threats but had no local source to tap for what was going on. Our news source? A siren. Obviously a siren is better than nothing but it is also important to be able to access specific information and advice from authorities on what actions need to be taken. A railroad is close to our home. If there were an accident and poisonous substances were released into the air, how would we know and where would be able to go for information. With no local source of immediate news, all is left to chance. This is hardly a remedy in the Age of Communication.

The community would also benefit by having information about the people in the community. What are they doing and how is it helping the community at large? This could encourage participation by more and more people for the benefit of all. So many people are so busy in their daily lives they do not have the opportunity to go searching for all that is going on. We miss the fine work and the not so fine work being performed. This is also true on the larger local and state levels. The cable companies are about drama and the big events. I actually heard of a woman going to Nashville, TN, on vacation because so little time was given to the recent floods there because of the terror attack in Times Square and the oil spill in the Gulf that she was unaware of the flooding in Nashville. With the disappearance of local news and news papers and the turn to just present the big and the dramatic stories, we do not learn about the also ran events on the national and world levels let alone !

the state and local.

People need to know what is going on beyond the "drama" events of the day. When Tiger Woods was going through his troubles, I could not find out what else was going on in the world. It was as if Mr. Woods was the world. Well, he is not. We need more breadth and depth to coverage and we need more local coverage.

How is Commercial Media Serving Your Community?

Media consolidation has resulted in the near disappearance of local options. We have a few local radio stations but they mostly play national programs. When a major event occurs like a storm or emergency, little detail can be found. The large city media nearby focus first on their own area and then may give a little attention to other small communities surrounding it. We used to have our own television station and a number of radio stations that had local news and weather. The change and the loss to the sense of community is grave.

I believe government should support an effort to encourage the development of community news outlets. Weekly newspapers are doing a good job but they are weeklies. We need a daily access that focuses on local government, issues, community, weather, traffic, and emergencies. We need to know what is going on so we can begin to be wise locally and to be informed before voting our decisions or taking action. We need this on the state level as well. I always try to seek out who is running for office but, especially in the case of judges, I always find I missed someone.

What is the State of Noncommercial, Nonprofit, and Public Media?

Our local area is served by WKSU-FM operating out of Kent State University. But their focus is primarily national as is their programming.

There are some local cable access stations but little is done with these. A couple of schools run school board information and school schedule items and a local show or two. There used to be a number of forums that featured local leaders but these appear to be all gone now. At least, I have never seen anything on these stations like this any more.

I think people would tune in to local television and radio programs dealing with local issues. Our PBS station recently gave a "hiatus" to one such show because it had a low share. But as one of the people who watched it weekly, I learned a great deal about what was going on from the people who know and work with leaders in our community. Now where will I find that information? A program of nonprofit news focused on the local events and issues would be very valuable and could be used by schools as a teaching device by drawing in student reporters. We have several colleges that could also be drawn upon to aid in providing staff. A growth and learning process could be going on here for everyone.

What is the Impact of the Internet and Mobile Information?

I am older and am not a fan of most of the Social Media sites. However, most of the people I know who are younger than me by a decade or two are immersed into it and find it fun and useful to their lives. I have yet to see it be used in a news decimating way. But it could be a natural if goals were set and responsibilities defined for providers and users. Maybe it is still too new. Clearly real time

messaging could have important functions locally.

I have not taken advantage of local government web sites. The few times I have tried, I have been frustrated that the information I was seeking was not available. I have seen no promotion of these sites and no promotion of the access to information they offer. I do not even think of them as a resource but I will begin to research this more.

Most people in my community must purchase connection to the web. Local colleges have wy-fi available.

Over all the availability of information about my community has decreased over the last several decades despite the development of new and speedier forms of distribution. In the end, the content is only as good as the content providers. Right now, too much focus is on the delivery system and not on what is being delivered. This is true from the national, state, and local levels. And the United States is the worse for it as is our form of government. News outlets used to keep our leaders honest. Who will do that now when people take to the air ways and deliberately fill it with lies and partial truths and twisted logic? Corporations should not own the communication ways and definitely should not control the content. Again, this is true on all levels of access. Attention must be paid to this issue as well as the means of delivery.